

C. Speakers Bureaus

Objective	A Speakers Bureau helps to demystify the role of judges and the judicial process, to reach a broader community, and to heighten understanding of the problems faced by both judges and the public in dealing with our judicial system. A Speakers Bureau can open the lines of communication between the courts and the community by providing a forum for judges and residents to exchange views about common concerns. Additionally, the program makes civic opinion leaders aware of issues facing the judiciary and fosters a more personal relationship between the bench and members of the community.
Potential Audience	League of Women Voters; Rotary Club; bar associations; local chambers of commerce; Kiwanis Club; local senior citizens' groups, schools, and other neighborhood groups; state, city, and county legislators; NAACP; Latino groups; gay and lesbian groups; churches, synagogues, and temples; school advisory councils and PTAs (not an exhaustive list).
Format	Judges, commissioners, court executives, and other court staff speak to groups either at locations in the community and/or at the courthouse. Individual speakers or members of a panel address concerns of interest to the particular audience and then answer questions from the floor.
Content	Suggested topics include landlord-tenant disputes, individual rights and responsibilities, family and juvenile law, small claims cases, auto accidents, domestic violence, drugs, gangs, access and fairness, interpreters, the administration of justice, and justice careers.
Getting the Word Out	Since business organizations, community groups, religious organizations, community centers, schools and libraries can be invaluable in building public interest and support for the Speakers Bureau, it is important that courts actively seek their support and involvement. Send announcements, brochures, and news releases to these groups and the news media. Samples of these materials are found in the <i>Samples & Tools</i> subsection at the end of this chapter.
Evaluation:	At the event, forms can be distributed to attendees asking them both to evaluate the program content, presentation, location, and timing and to solicit issues of interest for future programs. Request information about other groups or organizations that may be interested in sponsoring a Speakers Bureau. (See <i>Samples & Tools</i> for an evaluation tool.)



Key Points for Organizing a Speakers Bureau

1. Designate a coordinator.
2. Identify, recruit, and train volunteer judges, commissioners, and court staff willing to speak to groups at the courthouse and in the community. (See *Samples & Tools* for a recruitment letter.)
3. Contact speakers and community leaders to identify issues of concern to specific groups and the community, as well as issues they want to bring before the public.
4. Produce a brochure describing your Speakers Bureau. Include the purpose of the program, topics for discussion, format, and how to schedule a program. (See *Sample & Tools* for a sample brochure.)
5. Identify groups that could provide a forum for the Speakers Bureau. Contact members of these groups to learn what issues are of interest to them. When appropriate, collaborate with civic groups in organizing sessions.
6. Get the word out by distributing announcements to business and community organizations. Ask these organizations to publish the announcement in their newsletters and/or request to use their mailing lists. If you want media coverage, send a news release to the local newspaper and television and radio stations. (See *Sample & Tools* for a sample news release.)
7. Prepare useful brochures, contact lists, etc. for distribution at the event. (See Section 5E, *Public Information Materials*.)



What Works

The Speakers Bureau is probably one of the easiest community outreach programs to set up. Publicize it through the bar associations, schools, established community organizations like the League of Women Voters, and other neighborhood groups. Once these organizations know you are willing to come out to speak and listen to them, you will have made an important first step in opening an ongoing dialogue between the courts and the community. This exchange enables judges to better understand how the community views the justice system and what the community wants and needs from the courts.

The agenda of your Speakers Bureau has a lot to do with how many people you will attract to the program. The most effective and popular programs focus on issues and activities of interest to members of a particular organization or to the community as a whole. Speakers Bureaus can be presented in a variety of formats most suitable to your community and resources.

The **Judges' Speakers Bureau of Los Angeles County** distributes quarterly mailings about the Speakers Bureau to 400–500 civic, social, and education groups listed in the *Sourcebook for Los Angeles / Orange County / San Diego Counties* published by Bernardo Press (619-451-3790). Check with your chamber of commerce for similar directories for your area. (See *Samples & Tools* for a sample mailing and brochure.)

The **Judges Speakers Bureau of Los Angeles County** addresses issues that include drugs, gangs, domestic violence, and jury service. Many organizations also request a basic primer on how a case progresses through the court system to resolution. (Contact: Marcia Skolnik, 213-974-6358.)

The **Second Appellate District Court** in Los Angeles holds outreach luncheon meetings with state, county, and city legislators, and bar associations. The program includes an informal reception, buffet luncheon, guest speaker, and question/answer period. (Contact: Hon. Vaino Spencer, 213-897-5035.)

Another approach to presenting issues is seen in the activities of the “**Meet Your Judges**” program of the **Superior Court of California, County of Riverside**, which brings together state and federal courts, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Marshal, and high school students. This forum is used to introduce all the judges, swear in new citizens, and judge an essay contest for high school students. Person-to-person contact is used to plan and organize this event. It is promoted with advertising and news releases to the press, bar associations, and the federal government. Riverside courts



recommend holding the event annually so it remains a special event. Allow at least six weeks to organize. At the start, call together participants for a brainstorming session to determine what should be done and who should be involved. In this way, you won't overlook anyone. Talk with others who have produced similar events. (Contact: Carol Waterhouse-Tejada, 909-955-5562.)

Some Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ A critical component in organizing a successful Speakers Bureau is having the support of the bench. In recruiting speakers, share with them the success stories resulting from past speaking experiences and/or outreach efforts appreciated by the people in the community.➤ Allow two to three months for planning and organizing a Speakers' Bureau.➤ Your most valuable tool is a good book of contacts, like the sourcebook used by the Los Angeles Municipal Court mentioned above.➤ A word of caution: before promoting your Speakers Bureau to a large number of organizations, make sure you have recruited an adequate number of speakers to meet the demand for programs.
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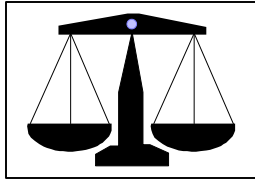
Samples & Tools

- ✓ **Sample: Memo and Questionnaire for Current and Prospective Speakers**
Source: Los Angeles County
- ✓ **Sample: Letter and Questionnaire for Community Organizations**
Source: Los Angeles County
- ✓ **Tool: Letter to Community Representatives**
- ✓ **Sample: Brochure**
Source: Los Angeles County
- ✓ **Tool: News Release**
- ✓ **Tool: Evaluation Form**



**Sample: Memo and Questionnaire for Current and Prospective Speakers
Los Angeles County**

Page One



**Los Angeles County
Judges' Speakers Bureau**

110 North Grand Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90012 213-974-6358 FAX 213-625-7124

July 1998

TO: All Judicial Officers
Los Angeles County Superior and Municipal Courts

FROM: Robert W. Parkin, Presiding Judge
Los Angeles Superior Court
Veronica S. McBeth, Presiding Judge
Los Angeles Municipal Court
John Vernon Meigs, Chair
Municipal Court Judges' Association

SUBJECT: JUDICIAL SPEAKERS BUREAU

The Judicial Speakers Bureau has been very successful as a joint effort between the Los Angeles Superior Court and the Los Angeles Municipal Court over the past four years. Serving civic and educational organizations throughout Los Angeles County, many of you have volunteered to speak to these organizations. Through this contact we have strengthened our link to the community we serve.

For those of you who have participated in this worthwhile program, thank you and we hope you will continue to do so. For those of you who have not, please consider joining your colleagues to help increase public awareness and understanding of the court system. A questionnaire is attached and it should be returned to the Los Angeles Municipal Court Public Affairs Office.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and interest in this coordinated effort to reach out to our fellow citizens in Los Angeles.

Attachment



Sample: Memo and Questionnaire for Current and Prospective Speakers, Los Angeles County (continued)

Page Two

**Judges' Speakers Bureau
Judicial Officer Questionnaire**

Name: _____

Court Location: _____

1. Would you be interested in participating in the Judges' Speakers Bureau?
Yes No

2. In what areas of expertise are you interested in speaking?

Bails/jails/prison	How to become a judge
Civil/small claims	Jury service
Crime and punishment	Juvenile issues
Drugs/gangs	Landlord/tenant
Drunk driving/traffic	Role of the judge
Family law	Three strikes

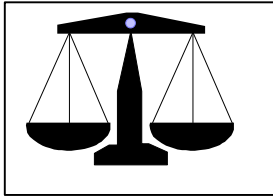
Other subjects you would like to speak about: _____

3. When are you available to speak?
Breakfast meetings Noon
Evenings Weekends
4. Do you have specific groups that you would like to address (civic organizations, schools, your alma mater)?



**Sample: Letter and Questionnaire for Community Organizations
Los Angeles County**

Page One



Los Angeles County

Judges' Speakers Bureau

110 North Grand Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90012 213-974-6358 FAX 213-625-7124

April 1998

Dear Community Member:

As judges of the Los Angeles County Superior and Municipal Courts, we invite you to assist us in improving communications between the courts and the communities we serve. We are contacting your organization because it is well respected in our community and we feel it could assist us in better understanding and reaching the citizenry. We would welcome the opportunity to hear from you or to meet with your group to discuss any topics of interest or concern.

Enclosed for your information are both a copy of our Speakers Bureau brochure and a response questionnaire. We encourage you to complete the questionnaire to open a direct line of communication between the courts and your organization.

We would appreciate your sharing the contents of this letter with your members and any other interested groups. You may contact us by mail through the Los Angeles Municipal Court Public Affairs Office or by fax at 213-625-7124.

We look forward to hearing from you and to establishing a line of communication for better understanding of our justice system.

Robert W. Parkin, Presiding Judge
Los Angeles Superior Court

Veronica S. McBeth, Presiding Judge
Los Angeles Municipal Court

Hon. John Vernon Meigs, Chair
Municipal Court Judges' Association



**Sample: Letter and Questionnaire for Community Organizations
Los Angeles County (continued)**

Page Two

Dear Judges Parkin, McBeth, and Meigs:

We have received your letter and would like to have further contact with the courts as follows:

We would like to remain on your mailing list.

We would like a judge to come to our meeting on (date/time) _____
to discuss the following issues:

Bails/jails/prison
Civil/small claims
Crime and punishment
Drugs/gangs
Drunk driving/traffic
Family law
Other _____

How to become a judge
Jury service
Juvenile issues
Landlord/tenant
Role of the judge
Three strikes

We would like a court staff professional to come to our meeting on (date/time) _____
to discuss the following issues:

Bails/jails/prison
Civil/small claims
Crime and punishment
Drugs/gangs
Drunk driving/traffic
Family law
Other _____

How to become a judge
Jury service
Juvenile issues
Landlord/tenant
Role of the judge
Three strikes

Organization Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone Number _____

Contact Person _____

Please return this questionnaire to:

Judges' Speakers Bureau
c/o LAMC Public Affairs Office
County Courthouse Room 428G
110 N. Grand Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90012
FAX 213-625-7124



Tool: Letter to Community Representatives

Date

XXXXXX XXXX
XXX XXX XXX
XXX XXXX

Dear (name)

The judges of (name) County have formed a Speakers Bureau to talk with groups such as (name of organization) about the role of the courts and the issues and needs of the community in court-related matters. As a community service, we can provide speakers for your meeting, event, or school. The enclosed brochure lists a few topics for discussion, and I invite your suggestions so that our program can be the most meaningful to the members of your organization.

We formed the Speakers Bureau for two reasons: One, to increase public understanding and knowledge of the judicial system, and two, to provide a forum for judges and members of the community to discuss common concerns. This ongoing dialogue enables us to stay in touch with the people we serve.

Please review the enclosed brochure and call us to schedule a speaker for your next function. We're happy to work with you in developing an appropriate format and content of interest to your organization.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
(name)

enclosure



WHAT IS THE SPEAKERS BUREAU?

The Speakers Bureau is composed of Los Angeles County judges who speak to community groups.

The Speakers Bureau has two goals:

To increase public understanding and knowledge of the judicial system

To provide a forum for judges and members of the community to exchange views about common concerns

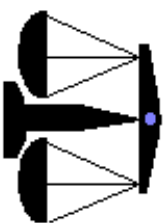
HOW CAN YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SPEAKERS BUREAU?

Many judges from the Speakers Bureau have spoken to and talked with schools and community organizations.

Take advantage of the Speakers Bureau. Call, write or fax your request for a speaker today.

Court Public Affairs Office

110 North Grand Avenue, Room
428-G
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-974-6358
Fax 213-625-7124



Los Angeles County

**Judges'
Speakers
Bureau**

WHAT CAN THE SPEAKERS BUREAU DO FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

The Speakers Bureau can provide judges to speak at your event, meeting or school function.

The courts have a major influence on society and daily life. Judicial officers can provide insight into how civil and criminal cases proceed through the court system and how conflicts are resolved.

Los Angeles County judges represent the community and work hard to serve you. They welcome the opportunity to meet with your organization and discuss current issues and the role of the courts in your community.

WHAT CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION DO FOR THE SPEAKERS BUREAU?

Your organization can assist the Speakers Bureau and the courts by providing input about the needs and problems affecting the community in court-related matters.

WHAT ISSUES CONCERN YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION?

If you are a teacher and need someone to talk about legal issues, call to have a judge speak to your students.

If you represent a community organization, a judge can discuss many issues that concern your members.

The following are a few examples of topics judges can speak about:

- Bail/Jails/Prisons
- Civil/Small Claims
- Crime and Punishment
- Drugs/Gangs
- Drunk Driving/Traffic
- Family Law
- How to Become a Judge
- Jury Service
- Juvenile Issues
- Landlord/Tenant
- Role of the Judge
- Three Strikes

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR THE COMMUNITY?

We can open lines of communication between the courts and the community in various ways, such as:

Communities helping the courts understand their concerns

The courts helping people understand their rights

Judges speaking to students about drugs, gangs, drunk driving and other legal issues that affect them



Tool: News Release

**For more information,
contact:(name) (phone)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Judges Panel to Address
(topic)
(date), (place)**

(City, Date)—(name of county) judges will discuss (topic) at the (type of function) of the (name of organization) (time, date) at (place)

(Two to three lines about the points to be addressed and any background about the issue in the community, e.g., statistics, scope of problem, concerns expressed by organization and/or community).

The (name) County Judges' Speakers Bureau is available as a community service to organizations and schools. Judges volunteer their time to talk with groups about the role of the courts in the community and to discuss the needs and problems affecting the community in court-related matters.

For more information about the (name) program and the Judges' Speakers Bureau, contact (name) at (phone).

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Tool: Speakers Bureau Evaluation

Speakers Bureau Questionnaire

The following evaluation will allow us to evaluate the interest of the community and the services of our office. Please take a few moments to fill out this form and return it to the speaker, or send it to: [INSERT Contact, Court, Address, Fax]

1. Name of speaker _____
2. Date and time of speaking event _____
3. Name of audience (school/community organization) _____
4. Topic of discussion/speech _____
5. Length of discussion/speech _____
6. Was speaker focused on the requested topic? Yes No
7. Were questions answered satisfactorily? Yes No
8. How would you rate your experience with the speaker?
 Excellent Good Fair Poor
9. Would you request the same speaker for a future meeting? Yes No
10. What can we do to improve the next speaking engagement?

11. Were the arrangements satisfactory? Yes No
12. Are there any additional services that the court can provide to accommodate your next speaker request?

13. Comments?

